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and an engraver on copper and wood, he also executed several pieces of sculpture with surprising delicacy and natural expression of character. An admirable specimen of his skill in this department of art is preserved in the Print-room of the British Museum, to which institution it was bequeathed by the late R. Payne Knight, Esq., who had purchased it at Brussels for 500 guineas, several years before. This exquisite piece of sculpture measures seven inches and three-quarters in height, and five inches and a half in width. It is carved in *alto-relievo*, in hone-stone of a delicate cream colour, and is in one piece, with the exception of the dog and one or two books in the front. It bears date 1510. The subject is, "*The Naming of John the Baptist*," according to the narrative contained in the Gospel by Luke, chapter i. verses 59 to 64.

In the front, to the right, is an old man with a tablet, on which some Hebrew characters are inscribed. Further to the right, and immediately behind him, is another old man; and behind him a young man, said by some to be intended by the artist for a portrait of himself. Kneeling before the recording priest, is an aged nurse with the infant John in her arms. On the bed, Elizabeth, the mother of John, is seen lying, on the more distant side of which a female attendant is standing, and on the other an elderly man is seen resting on the edge of the bed. This latter figure is doubtless intended for Zacharias, the father of John, and as the sacred narrative informs us that he was struck dumb for a season, the artist has represented him in the act of making signs to Elizabeth with his fingers.

The figures in the foreground are executed in bold relief; and the character and expression of the heads have rarely been surpassed in any work of sculpture executed on the same scale. Albert Durer's monogram, with the date 1510, is inscribed on a small tablet at the foot of the bedstead.

This curious carving is in perfect condition, with the exception of the hands of Zacharias and Elizabeth, some of the fingers of which are broken off.

Those who are acquainted with the works of Albert Durer will perceive that our artists have copied his style of drawing and engraving very successfully.

A PEEP AT COUNTRY COUSINS, AND HOW IT ENDED.

LETTER II.

Whitehaven, April, 1820.

MY DEAR FATHER,—My last letter would say all that was necessary regarding family detail, so I will go on with my description of old customs, which you say you like so much to receive. Tom and Edward, the two younger boys, have lately been very full of an odd kind of barring-out, in which they have been engaged at the village school. This said affair has had a melancholy ending, as you will hear. The barring-out, it seems, is an annual spring-tide event, when all arrangements concerning the holidays and other matters are settled between the master and his scholars, yet it is considered a profound mystery, and the appointed day is only whispered to the initiated. When it arrived this year, the school-room was filled long before daylight, a good fire was lighted, and the door securely barricaded. Soon after daybreak, exclamations resounded of "He is coming, he is coming!" and with beating hearts (so Tom declares) the boys awaited the arrival of their dominie. He knocked at the door, then tried the latchet, but not a sound could be heard from within, and finally he looked in at the windows, confronting the boldest of the school, to whom he called out, "Boys, open the door! boys, I insist on your letting me in." But neither coaxing or threats availed him, and he left the place, to return in a few minutes with my uncle, because he was looked on as the principal parent in the village. All these preliminaries are styled "*sham*," and the chief fun consists in firing off salutes with a pistol, generally wheedled out of some reluctant father for the purpose. My uncle came up under a grand discharge, since, you must know, he had privately furnished each of his three boys with a pistol the previous evening, and a long speechifying succeeded, and then the master demanded

through the keyhole what was the cause of the insurrection; to which his riotous pupils replied, "Our old laws, sir," and my uncle made answer, "Very well, boys, let me see them." "Here they are, sir," was the glad response, and the protocol or manifesto of grievances was pushed through a chink in the door, and in a loud voice the dominie proceeded to read the document. I saw a copy of it afterwards, and its principal negotiations were, "that the scholars should neither be whipped nor set in a corner; that they should have three vacations, of two weeks each, at Easter, Christmas, and Midsummer, as well as two days' hunting, and two days' fishing." The master in my uncle's presence signed the paper, and in the safe custody of the latter it was then lodged for the ensuing twelve months. Of course, no lessons were attempted that day, and a general holiday was allowed, which gave rise to much merry-making, and this unfortunately ended in an accident which proved fatal to a brave little lad named Hugh Johnstone. We were told afterwards that the boy's clothes caught fire, when the scholars were engaged in the daring amusement of jumping over some burning tar-barrels, that my uncle had generously bestowed in order to make fine bonfires in honour of the barring-out. So employed, the child's woollen trousers had probably been ignited some time before he took any notice of them, and when he did, it was with great difficulty that the fire could be extinguished; and the surface of his body was so extensively burned, that, after thirty-eight hours of very sad suffering, the little lad expired. My aunt stayed with the boy the whole time; but before she came back we knew that life had departed by the tolling of the passing bell early last Thursday morning; and in the evening Susannah Gawthorpe came in to us weeping bitterly, for the lad was her own cousin. She asked me whether I would accompany her to Widow Johnstone's, assuring me my going would be regarded as a token of goodwill. Of course, I assented, but could not help saying,—I longed so greatly to take her to my heart and try to console her,—"Why is it you will not let me be your friend, when I like you so much?" She replied, very sweetly, "Indeed, you are mistaken, since I liked you the first moment we met, and I know I have done wrong in appearing to avoid you." It is evident to me that some other cause than personal feeling towards myself has had to do with her peculiar manner; but we said no more on the subject just then, for our hearts were full of sad thoughts, and it was with mingled awe and reluctance that I thought of first looking upon the face of death. All dread was, however, superfluous; nothing could be more peaceful or more exquisitely beautiful than the young boy's quiet features. A little mirror over the chimney-piece, and several coloured prints, that hung round the room, I noticed were all covered by white cloths, and several young men and women sat round the body to secure its undisturbed repose until it should be laid in the grave. Even the widow seemed, to my surprise, really glad to see us; and, taking us into an inner room, perhaps experienced some relief in giving free vent to her sorrow in the presence of one who had loved her boy as Susannah had done. But she was soon wanted elsewhere, and we, in less than half an hour, took our leave, Susannah gladly accepting my invitation of her to sleep with me that night. A few words which fell from her when we were preparing for bed gave me, I thought, some insight into the feelings on her part that I had not hitherto suspected; but of these I must tell you another time. On the day before the funeral the clerk of the village church went round from house to house with a bell, which he rang in a peculiar toll, denoting the parish to which the deceased belonged. Every now and then he stopped, while his long funeral band, placed in his hat, floated on the breeze, as he made proclamation: "All friends and neighbours are desired to attend the burial of Hugh Johnstone, from Red Hope-lane to St. James's Church, to-morrow at three o'clock." This was the general invitation; but to the dwelling of those most nearly connected, and to the more influential persons in the neighbourhood, there was sent round a young girl wearing a large white calash, and carrying a tray under her arm, in

which were laid, neatly folded, packets of white paper containing gloves and bands. One set of these articles was left at my uncle's, and on Friday, about noon, the whole family went down to Widow Johnstone's, where preparations for the ceremony had been made on a large scale.

On each side of the door I noticed a small table, covered with snowy damask, and holding old-fashioned china vessels filled with sprigs of boxwood; and when the mournful procession filed out of the cottage, every one took a sprig, which they afterwards cast into the open grave. We had just left the house, when some one whispered, "The bees, the bees, has any one told them we're going?" I could not conceive what was meant, and Susannah, to whom the inquiry had been addressed, only said to me, "Wait for me one moment," and hastening back a few steps to the sunny wall, where stood the widow's chief wealth, a range of bee-hives, she spoke to them in a tone of singular mournfulness, her words barely audible, they were so interrupted by frequent sobs, as she said, "Toil on, pretty bees; toil on, for the widow's sake; but he who loved you best, little Hugh himself, is this day to be carried out a corpse from his mother's house." I learned afterwards that it was believed the bees would make no more honey if they were not informed when the deceased was going to be buried. On Susannah's rejoining me, and the procession moving on, she told me how every one was hoping

that the Armstrongs—two of the guests, and distant relations to the widow—would keep quiet until all was over, for they belonged to a family celebrated for laughing loud on all occasions. We certainly heard nothing but the sounds of suppressed weeping during our melancholy walk, or until the ceremony had been concluded. But I was rather startled, at the close of the service in the church, by the fat, rosy clerk shouting out, "All friends and neighbours to take tea at the house of the deceased!" and when my uncle's family and the widow returned to the cottage, which we reached somewhat in advance of the rest of the party, we assuredly did hear an indubitable roar of merriment approaching, which caused Robert to remark to me in a low tone, "The party will be here directly, for one may hear the Armstrongs laughing; it is, alas! no wonder—the people look upon a border burial as better fun than a Carlisle wedding." My uncle told me very riotous scenes generally took place at such times, and it was a great relief to Susannah, when she found that he and my aunt had very kindly persuaded the poor desolate widow to come to the Friars, where she passed the night, as soon as she should have bade her guests welcome. This has been rather a sad letter, but it is already too long; so I must hope my next will be more cheerful; and I remain, at all times,

Your affectionate daughter,

DORA HARCOURT.

HENRY THE GREAT, KING OF FRANCE AND NAVARRE.

IN every country there are certain names which are sure to invoke enthusiasm whenever they are mentioned. In England they speak of "Good Queen Bess;" in America the mention of Washington at a public meeting is always hailed with applause; in Spain the days of Ferdinand and Isabella are considered as the "golden" ones. The deeds of William Tell, form the subject of many a stirring story for the simple dwellers of the Swiss valleys; and in France, from the Pyrenees to the Seine, the memory of Henry the Fourth is held in a kind of veneration which we Americans scarcely understand. This sort of hero-worship is common to all ages and to all classes of minds—with the difference, however, that among the poor and uneducated the feeling is spontaneous and avowed, while with the rich and learned it is felt without being acknowledged, and spoken of only to be ridiculed; but it exists, nevertheless.

Few periods of French history are more interesting than that in which Henry the Fourth plays a part. Like his great contemporary Elizabeth, he is the most prominent historic figure of his time and country; and of his life and actions it may be said that where the historian has failed to illustrate either the one or the other, the poet, the novelist, and the painter have stepped in and gracefully filled up the canvas. Thus what Sir Walter Scott has done for the court and time of Elizabeth, Alexandre Dumas has accomplished for that of Henry the Fourth; and in the historical novels of both these writers we certainly get a clearer idea of the state of living in England and France in the sixteenth century than we can by possibility obtain from the writings of Hume or Rapin—mixed, it may be, with much that is objectionable, in a strictly historical point of view.

Henry IV. possessed all the qualities necessary to a hero. Brave, hardy, handsome, and of good address, it was not surprising that the French people should have hailed his accession to a throne which he claimed as a direct descendant of the heroic Hugh Capet. During the reign of Charles IX., and amidst the tumults which agitated France in the time of his successor, the weak and vacillating Henry III., the King of Navarre was faithful to the religion of the Huguenots; and though, to escape the massacre of St. Bartholomew, and to quiet the reproaches of the haughty Catherine de Medicis, the mother of the king, he feigned to be reconciled to the state church, there is little doubt that he was a sincere adherent to the reformed religion.

The murder of Henry III., in 1589, by the monk Jacques

Clement, opened the way to the throne of France for Henry of Navarre. He had married Margaret of Valois, and had been named by the dying monarch as his successor; but the peaceable possession of power by the Bourbon was disputed by the adherents of the Guise.

"The king is dead!" was the announcement, as Henry III. fell back into the arms of his sister's husband: "Long live the king!" was the loud response; and the dynasty of France was transferred to the Bourbon.

But a rival disputed Henry's right to the throne, and only through blood he reached it at last. It would be tedious to follow the steps of the first Bourbon king too minutely, or we might tell how, after having defeated the factitious Charles X., he engaged, by the assistance of England, in wars with Spain and Austria, his popularity with the people increasing every day; how the Catholics tried many and various schemes to dethrone their Huguenot king; how, by the advice of the celebrated Sully, Henry called together the heads of the state church, and made profession of the faith; how Henry made triumphal progress through his kingdom, and won back rebellious provinces from the hands of his enemies, everywhere winning, too, the hearts of the people by his magnanimity and noble presence; how his coronation was celebrated with great pomp at Chartres; how he entered Paris as undisputed king; how, despite his generosity and great qualities, his life was many times attempted; how he issued the famous and world-known Edict of Nantes, which gave religious liberty to all persons freely; how his divorce from Margaret de Valois, and his marriage with Mary de Medicis was sanctioned by the Pope; how the conspiracy of Biron was discovered and prevented from taking effect; and how Henry made treaties of alliance with the princes of England, Holland, and Germany, with the design of humbling the house of Austria.

Only the coronation of the queen remained to be performed ere Henry intended to join the army of the allies. But it was not to be. "Man proposes, but only God disposes." The queen was duly crowned, and Henry appointed her regent during his absence. This is the episode chosen by Rubens. Henry is presenting the golden orb, the emblem of sovereignty, to his queen; his son Lewis, then about thirteen years old, standing between them. At that moment it may be that he was meditating splendid and glorious projects for the advancement of his country, and the "pomp and circumstance" of war already filled his imagination. On the morning succeeding the queen's coronation, he wished to visit the arsenal, but the illness of